

SUB TOPIC THEME:
**FRUITS: ANGER LEADS TO
DESTRUCTION**

Lesson Objective:

To bring students recognition of the presence and influence of anger, by looking at the fruits of their hearts. When anger is pervasive in our lives the fruits of destruction become more and more apparent. Creating a dialogue with the kids about how to understand the effects of anger in our lives, recognize what fruits they are currently yielding, and how to cultivate a healthier, God-centered heart, will bring students to a new level in their relationship with Jesus Christ. This will happen through loving accountability, true confession, devotion to growth, and the hope and acceptance of the Lord's complete and all-loving transformation.



Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. A way to measure the longest reach, from finger tip to finger tip with outstretched arms.
2. Copies of the Student Response sheet (printed below)
3. Bibles so you can look up the Scripture story (or copy the ones below)
4. A passion to see students' hearts transformed!

Instructive Prep:

Anger is an emotion that every person will encounter and feel in their life. It's inevitable. What matters is the way in which we interact with this potentially destructive force. By talking with kids about the way anger can impact, mutate, and envelope their hearts, we will equip them to process this emotion in a healthy God-honoring way. Military teens in particular may find themselves bearing the long term fruits that destructive anger can produce. The constant transition, threat of family brokenness, and perpetual loss that make up military kids' lives creates the ideal fertile soil for a seed of anger to flourish.

This session is designed to create a dialogue with the students about the destruction anger can have in our lives and a clearer understanding of the benefits of choosing God's plan for handling anger. Not only do we want to enable them to recognize the presence of anger's fruits, but we want the kids to see the value in working hard to remove the roots of anger in our hearts,

(re)planting the truth of Jesus' perfect love, and living with the purpose of serving the Lord and spreading his message.

The progression of these studies is four-fold: learn, feel, do and what next. The goals are for students to (1) learn something new, (2) connect at an emotional level to some degree, and (3) participate in doing something during the study (like writing a resolution or making a list of goals). Finally, (4) the what next focuses on a change in attitude and/or behavior, which you will find in the challenge of the Life Application section. Remember, the movement is toward spiritual and emotional transformation in kids' lives, so the application section based on God's truth is really the crux of the time together! Have fun and lead well.

Intro:

You are angry. It happens. You're human. But how do you know when the anger has taken root in your heart? How do you know when the fruits you are bearing in life are of anger or of God? It's unrealistic to expect you to never feel angry again. That's not what God asks of us. What he does ask is that we interact with anger with wisdom, love, and in a way that will glorify him. By taking time to think about your thoughts and actions, as well as the motivations behind them, you will start to understand what seeds have been planted in your heart. Know that God loves you just as you are, but at the same time he desires so much more for you and your life. One way we can begin to move toward a more fulfilling and God-honoring life is by learning how to recognize and interact with anger. Doing this in a healthy way will not only save us from more pain and scars, but actually transform us into more joyful, purposeful, and influential people.

Intro Story:

During the time of the judges in the nation of Israel's history, which came after their exodus from Egypt and before the time of King Saul and King David, there lived a man named Balaam. He was a powerful sorcerer during a period when Israel had turned away from following God. The nearby nation of Moab was attacking Israel (this happened a lot when they stopped obeying the Lord) and Balaam had a reputation for being someone you wanted on your side. We don't know a lot about his life, but it's pretty clear when you look at his story that his heart was not in a good place and anger had some pretty deep roots. Take a look at part of his story in Numbers 22:1-35:

The Israelites moved on and set up camp in the plains of Moab east of the Jordan and opposite Jericho. **2** When the king of Moab, Balak son of Zippor, heard what the Israelites had done to the Amorites and how many Israelites there were, **3** he and all his people became terrified. **4** The Moabites said to the leaders of the Midianites, "This horde will soon destroy everything around us, like a bull eating the grass in a pasture." So King Balak **5** sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor near the Euphrates River in the land of Amaw. They brought him this message from Balak: "I

want you to know that a whole nation has come from Egypt; its people are spreading out everywhere and threatening to take over our land. **6** They outnumber us, so please come and put a curse on them for me. Then perhaps we will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. I know that when you pronounce a blessing, people are blessed, and when you pronounce a curse, they are placed under a curse.”

7 So the Moabite and Midianite leaders took with them the payment for the curse, went to Balaam, and gave him Balak's message. **8** Balaam said to them, “Spend the night here, and tomorrow I will report to you whatever the LORD tells me.” So the Moabite leaders stayed with Balaam.

9 God came to Balaam and asked, “Who are these people that are staying with you?”

10 He answered, “King Balak of Moab has sent them to tell me **11** that a people who came from Egypt has spread out over the whole land. He wants me to curse them for him, so that he can fight them and drive them out.”

12 God said to Balaam, “Do not go with them, and do not put a curse on the people of Israel, because they have my blessing.”

13 The next morning Balaam went to Balak's messengers and said, “Go back home; the LORD has refused to let me go with you.” **14** So they returned to Balak and told him that Balaam had refused to come with them.

15 Then Balak sent a larger number of leaders, who were more important than the first.

16 They went to Balaam and gave him this message from Balak: “Please don't let anything prevent you from coming to me! **17** I will reward you richly and do anything you say. Please come and curse these people for me.”

18 But Balaam answered, “Even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not disobey the command of the LORD my God in even the smallest matter. **19** But please spend the night, as the others did, so that I may learn whether or not the LORD has something else to tell me.”

20 That night God came to Balaam and said, “If these men have come to ask you to go with them, get ready and go, but do only what I tell you.” **21** So the next morning Balaam saddled his donkey and went with the Moabite leaders.

22 God was angry that Balaam was going, and as Balaam was riding along on his donkey, accompanied by his two servants, the angel of the LORD stood in the road to bar his way. **23** When the donkey saw the angel standing there holding a sword, it left the road and turned into the fields. Balaam beat the donkey and brought it back onto the road. **24** Then the angel stood where the road narrowed between two vineyards and had a stone wall on each side. **25** When the donkey saw the angel, it moved over against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against it. Again Balaam beat the donkey. **26** Once more the angel moved ahead; he stood in a narrow place where there was no room at all to pass on either side. **27** This time, when the donkey saw the angel, it lay down. Balaam lost his temper and began to beat the donkey with his stick. **28** Then the LORD gave the donkey the power of speech, and it said to Balaam, “What have I done to you? Why have you beaten me these three times?”

29 Balaam answered, “Because you have made a fool of me! If I had a sword, I would kill you.”

30 The donkey replied, “Am I not the same donkey on which you have ridden all your life? Have I ever treated you like this before?”

“No,” he answered.

31 Then the LORD let Balaam see the angel standing there with his sword; and Balaam threw himself face downward on the ground. **32** The angel demanded, “Why have you beaten your donkey three times like this? I have come to bar your way, because you should not be making this journey. **33** But your donkey saw me and turned aside three times. If it hadn't, I would have killed you and spared the donkey.”

34 Balaam replied, “I have sinned. I did not know that you were standing in the road to oppose me; but now if you think it is wrong for me to go on, I will return home.”

35 But the angel said, “Go on with these men, but say only what I tell you to say.” So Balaam went on with them.

When Balaam got to King Balak and went out with him to look over the 2 armies and the battlefield, the words that came out of his mouth weren't curses, instead he restated the blessing of God and his covenant with Israel. Did you notice how much influence anger had in Balaam's life? It's evident that his heart was bearing fruits of destruction. It's also obvious that his words and actions had power. Like verse 6 said, when he blessed someone they were blessed and when he cursed someone they were cursed.

We often think of anger as the actions that are so obvious in people's lives -- like punching a wall, getting in fights, or breaking things. However, when we look at Scripture, we see that the place that anger's fruits first begin to show in our lives are the words that come out of our mouths. What we say matters and has an impact on those around us, just like Balaam. Keeping your heart free of anger and centered on glorifying God will bring words of love from your mouth and actions of joy and generosity.

Intro Questions:

1. What fruits of destruction did you see in Balaam's life?
2. How do you know when the fruits you are bearing in life are of anger or of God?

Personal Reflection Questions:

To determine in what order you should answer, snag a piece of each person's hair and go from shortest to longest.

1. Which of the verses stood out to you the most? Why?
2. Make 3 columns and 3 rows and list 3 times when you made a choice to either act in anger or with forgiveness and love, then name the feelings and consequences

surrounding that choice. In the last column identify what (if anything) you would do differently when faced with a similar situation. Take some time to do this and share with the group the one that you struggle with the most. (use Student response sheet)

3. When did you experience someone else extending mercy and forgiveness to you instead of anger? What impact did that have on you?
4. What do you think of the possibility of communicating God's love to others? Write down 5+ thoughts/opinions on this (ex: .that makes me nervous, excited; I think it's lame God makes us do his work, etc.) (use Student response sheet)
5. What are some ways you already communicate who Jesus is through how you act? What else do you think gets communicated most often through your actions? (use Student response sheet)

Central Bible Passages:

Anger manifests itself in our lives in a bunch of ways. Some fruits are yielded immediately when we answer someone with yelling or insincerity; others develop over time and destroy our relationships or resilience to life's challenges. The Bible has a lot to say about the sources of anger and how to fight against its destruction in our lives. The first place this struggle happens (and it is a very real struggle) is in our hearts. The words that come out of our mouths and the actions we do are a direct result of the seeds we nurture in our hearts. It's vital that you pay attention to the state of your heart and purposefully nurture the healthy and God-given seeds, while rooting out and rejecting the evil and destructive ones. Take a look at what the Lord has to say about our hearts, and the power, importance, and impact of our words and actions.

James 1:19-27

Remember this, my dear friends! Everyone must be quick to listen, but slow to speak and slow to become angry. Human anger does not achieve God's righteous purpose. So get rid of every filthy habit and all wicked conduct. Submit to God and accept the word that he plants in your hearts, which is able to save you.

Do not deceive yourselves by just listening to his word; instead, put it into practice. If you listen to the word, but do not put it into practice you are like people who look in a mirror and see themselves as they are. They take a good look at themselves and then go away and at once forget what they look like. But if you look closely into the perfect law that sets people free, and keep on paying attention to it and do not simply listen and then forget it, but put it into practice—you will be blessed by God in what you do.

Do any of you think you are religious? If you do not control your tongue, your religion is worthless and you deceive yourself. What God the Father considers to be pure and genuine religion is this: to take care of orphans and widows in their suffering and to keep oneself from being corrupted by the world.

James 3:5-18

So it is with the tongue: small as it is, it can boast about great things. Just think how large a forest can be set on fire by a tiny flame! And the tongue is like a fire. It is a world of wrong, occupying its place in our bodies and spreading evil through our whole being. It sets on fire the entire course of our existence with the fire that comes to it from hell itself. We humans are able to tame and have tamed all other creatures—wild animals and birds, reptiles and fish. But no one has ever been able to tame the tongue. It is evil and uncontrollable, full of deadly poison. We use it to give thanks to our Lord and Father and also to curse other people, who are created in the likeness of God. Words of thanksgiving and cursing pour out from the same mouth. My friends, this should not happen! No spring of water pours out sweet water and bitter water from the same opening. A fig tree, my friends, cannot bear olives; a grapevine cannot bear figs, nor can a salty spring produce sweet water.

Are there any of you who are wise and understanding? You are to prove it by your good life, by your good deeds performed with humility and wisdom. But if in your heart you are jealous, bitter, and selfish, don't sin against the truth by boasting of your wisdom. Such wisdom does not come down from heaven; it belongs to the world, it is unspiritual and demonic. Where there is jealousy and selfishness, there is also disorder and every kind of evil. But the wisdom from above is pure first of all; it is also peaceful, gentle, and friendly; it is full of compassion and produces a harvest of good deeds; it is free from prejudice and hypocrisy. And goodness is the harvest that is produced from the seeds the peacemakers plant in peace.

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 16:27-29&32

Evil people look for ways to harm others; even their words burn with evil.
Gossip is spread by wicked people; they stir up trouble and break up friendships.
Violent people deceive their friends and lead them to disaster. It is better to be patient than powerful. It is better to win control over yourself than over whole cities.

Luke 6:27&28

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you.

Proverbs 10:11&12

A good person's words are a fountain of life, but a wicked person's words hide a violent nature. Hate stirs up trouble, but love forgives all offenses.

1 Peter 3:8-9

To conclude: you must all have the same attitude and the same feelings; love one another, and be kind and humble with one another. Do not pay back evil with evil or cursing with cursing; instead, pay back with a blessing, because a blessing is what God promised to give you when he called you.

Matthew 15:10-20

Then Jesus called the crowd to him and said to them, “Listen and understand! It is not what goes into your mouth that makes you ritually unclean; rather, what comes out of it makes you unclean.”

Then the disciples came to him and said, “Do you know that the Pharisees had their feelings hurt by what you said?”

“Every plant which my Father in heaven did not plant will be pulled up,” answered Jesus. “Don't worry about them! They are blind leaders of the blind; and when one blind man leads another, both fall into a ditch.”

Peter spoke up, “Explain this saying to us.”

Jesus said to them, “You are still no more intelligent than the others. Don't you understand? Anything that goes into your mouth goes into your stomach and then on out of your body. But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these are the things that make you ritually unclean. For from your heart come the evil ideas, which lead you to kill, commit adultery, and do other immoral things; to rob, lie, and slander others. **20** These are the things that make you unclean. But to eat without washing your hands as they say you should—this doesn't make you unclean.”

Life Application:

1. Reread the verses from James 3 and as a group identify the various fruits/emotions/actions both good and bad that are listed (such as jealousy, words of thanksgiving, peacefulness, and prejudice.) Have each student write down the 2-3 they experience/do daily. (use student response sheet)
2. Think about this past week. What was something that happened that you can now see was evidence of anger's bad fruit from your heart? Identify what the root is and what action you can take in the future to uproot that anger. (ex. I flipped out

4. HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR WORDS AND ACTIONS THAT ARE PRODUCTS OF THE ANGER IN YOUR HEART HAVE IMPACTED PEOPLE?

5. HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR WORDS AND ACTIONS THAT ARE PRODUCTS OF GODLINESS AND LOVE IN YOUR HEART HAVE IMPACTED PEOPLE?

6. WRITE DOWN THE 2-3 FRUITS/EMOTIONS/ACTIONS FROM JAMES 3 YOU EXPERIENCE/DO DAILY.

7. DEVELOP A LIST WITHIN THE GROUP OF SOME SPECIFIC AND ‘DO-ABLE’ WAYS TO UPROOT THE ANGER IN YOUR HEART AND INSTEAD PLANT AND NURTURE GOOD SEEDS. MAKE A PACT TO HELP AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER TO FOLLOW THROUGH WITH THESE AT SCHOOL AND YOUR HOME.